

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

What is Clinical Depression in Adults¹

What is Depression?

“Depression” is a feeling we get when things just go too wrong, and we feel sad, briefly.

What is Clinical Depression?

“Clinical Depression” is the very serious mental illness. It is characterized by deeper and extremely intense feelings of sadness, despair and even hopelessness.

Symptoms of Clinical Depression can include:

- Intense feelings of sadness, despair, hopelessness, and worthlessness
- Feeling tired all of the time
- An inability to experience joy or pleasure
- Problems concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- An increase or decrease in sleeping and/or eating
- Thoughts of death and/or suicide (Read our page on Suicide in Adults to learn the warning signs, who is at risk, how you can help and for other information.)

In Clinical Depression, some or all, of these symptoms happen almost every day over a period of two weeks or more. Clinical Depression is a serious illness that interferes with a person’s ability to live a normal life. Some people with Clinical Depression are at risk for suicide.

Clinical Depression is one of the most common mental illnesses in the United States

About 10 percent of American adults are affected by Clinical Depression every year, 80% of them can be treated successfully.

This year, our legislators passed a “parity” law. For the first time ever, some of our medical insurance coverage must include mental health treatment as it does any other treatment. It’s called “parity”. It means if we have the flu, a broken leg, an anxiety disorder or diabetes, our public health providers are expected to care for all treatment on par, or equally, with each other.

What causes Clinical Depression?

Clinical Depression tends to run in families and be associated with a chemical imbalance in the brain; a chemical messenger – serotonin – is involved. It can be triggered by a life crisis, such as the death of someone close, a major life change such as childbirth, an illness or a serious accident. Clinical Depression may also occur without any obvious cause.

Treatment which makes it possible to recapture a normal life activities.

What clinical Depression is NOT !

Many people who actually suffer Clinical Depression never seek a diagnosis or receive the treatment they so desperately need. Frequently, this is due to the stigma that has surrounded depression for so long.

- Depression is not something to be ashamed of.
- Depression is not the same thing as feeling "blue" or "down."
- Depression is not a character flaw or the sign of a weak personality.
- Depression is not a "mood" someone can "snap out of." (Would you ask someone to "snap out of" diabetes or high blood pressure?)

What kind of doctor can help diagnose Clinical Depression?

Either refer yourself, or have your primary care physician refer you to a **psychiatrist or psychologist**. They may be in private practice, or part of a medical group.

Many people receive care through licensed mental health centers.

Clinical Depression is often accompanied by physical symptoms and can have other similar psychological symptoms.

That’s why it’s so very important to have a medical examination to properly diagnose any physical symptoms and see mental health clinical to accurately diagnose causes of other symptoms.

How can Clinical Depression be treated?

Treatment for Clinical Depression often combines medications and specific types of personal introspection and talking therapies, including:

- Behavioral Therapy focuses on changing specific actions and uses techniques to stop unwanted behaviors.
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy teaches people to identify, understand and adjust the ways they think.

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